

# ENDING THE CONFLICT IN IRAQ—IS PARTITION THE ANSWER?

BY

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## ABSTRACT

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In November 2005, the National Security Council published the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, which broadly lays out the US policy for helping Iraq establish a stable, secure, democratic state. The document focuses on high-level US plans and strategy that will be implemented to achieve victory in terms of US interests. One specified US interest is long-term peace in Iraq. However, the document stops short of describing steps that the world community, and specifically Iraq, should take in order to secure a lasting peace that will endure well beyond direct US military involvement in Iraq.

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- The role that resources (namely oil and food) play in the decision
- The role of the US military during and after partition
- Roles for the world community/United Nations
- Where would the partitions occur and how they would be secured

Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations and considerations on partition, and related conflict resolution efforts. There are also recommended areas for continued research.





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## ENDING THE CONFLICT IN IRAQ—IS PARTITION THE ANSWER?

### Introduction

The November 2006 mid-term congressional elections served as a strong indication that the people of the US were ready for a change in the political leadership and direction of the country. Most political analysts deduced that pre-election US policy in Iraq and a perception of unsatisfactory progress there were the defining issues of the 2006 election. In the weeks preceding the election, debate centered on policy change recommendations from political candidates who often were vague regarding specific changes to US policy in Iraq. Also during this time frame, the US Congress appointed the Iraq Study Group—a bipartisan panel led by former Secretary of State James Baker. The panel's mission was to assess the Iraq policy in light of ongoing sectarian violence and other regional issues and make recommendations to the president for future policy in Iraq and the region. Even prior to the appointment of the Iraq Study Group, however; several recommendations were floated by foreign policy experts, the media, and politicians for bringing an end to sectarian violence in Iraq and facilitating a strategy for the ultimate withdrawal of US forces from the area.

Over a year before the 2006 elections, one such recommendation was raised in foreign policy circles and circulated throughout the media. Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware subsequently endorsed one variant of this recommendation. The plan called for the partition of Iraq into three mainly autonomous federated regions with a “strong” central Iraqi government. The federal regions would be divided according to the three primary ethnic sects that make up a majority of the Iraqi population: Shiite Muslims, Sunni Arabs, and Iraqi Kurds. Historically, all three of these groups have been present at a fairly consistent level in the region, have been relatively geographically stable, and have struggled for their existence and for political relevance over the last two centuries [1]. Furthermore, each has been involved at one time or another in multiple conflicts with one or both of the remaining two population segments. The most recent example of this was evident during the rule of Saddam Hussein, a Sunni, who went to extremely brutal lengths to centralize power in order to maintain control over Shiites and Kurds in spite of the fact that Sunni Arabs comprise only 22% of the Iraqi population [2].

The concept of partition within a geographic region as a means of reducing or eliminating violence is certainly not a new idea. Partition was implemented by the British in 1946 with the intent of securing a peaceful, independent India. Because of strife between Indian Hindus and

Muslims, Pakistan was partitioned as an independent, primarily Muslim state. Even then, the idea was not new, having originated over 20 years prior in a 1923 Indian essay calling for that nation's independence from Great Britain [3]. Since that time, implementation and procedural execution of partition in India has been reviewed, analyzed, and found to possess several strengths and weaknesses. Another currently relevant example of partition employed as a means of eliminating or reducing conflict is the continuing separation of Turks and Greeks on the island of Cyprus. Although the constitution of Cyprus was approved and recognized internationally in 1960, conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots continued for another 14 years before a partition agreement was achieved through international mediation [4]. As in the instance of Indian partition, the circumstances leading to the partition of Cyprus, along with the process of implementation, has been analyzed and found to possess both strengths and weaknesses.

In fact, most scholars of modern conflict management agree that there are at least five instances where partition has been overtly implemented around the globe in an effort to promote peace and end ethnic or sectarian strife [5]. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been an impressive growth in scholarly research into partition and other conflict management tools. The strongest academic advocate of partition by far is Chaim Kaufmann, a professor of international relations at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. Kaufmann's 1996 paper, *Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars*, has served as a primer for academic research and extensive discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of partition as a conflict management tool. The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq and subsequent problems of sectarian violence and instability have sparked a renewed interest in Kaufmann's research and in the research of other academicians who refute or append his viewpoints on partition. Sectarian violence in Iraq continues to take an enormous toll, averaging over 1,000 Iraqi civilian and security force fatalities per month and over 50 US military fatalities per month [6]; the obvious question is: will partition work?

### Purpose and Organization of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to analyze partition as a means to promote stability and peace, end violence, and provide a structure for long-term prosperity and security both within Iraq and throughout the region. In doing so, the paper's ultimate focus is on providing insight into whether partition is the right answer for Iraq. The methodology for analyzing partition begins with analysis of current literature on conflict resolution. My focus is on research that



defines partition and explains when partition should be considered, how partition should be implemented, and why this strategy is preferred over other candidate conflict resolution strategies. Next, I will analyze the literature that is critical of partition and examine the perceived shortcomings of the strategy as well as why partition may not be the best solution for promoting security and stability in Iraq and throughout the region.

After analyzing conflict management literature, the paper will examine the specific application of partition to the Iraq situation. I will look at the current situation in Iraq and analyze internal factors that indicate favorable conditions for partition as well as those factors that cast doubt on partition as a successful strategy for the future of Iraq. Next, I will explore external considerations such as US interests in the region, potential US military roles in a partitioned Iraq, other regional players, neighboring states and Global War on Terrorism considerations that influence or would be impacted by the implementation of partition in Iraq.

The paper concludes with a summary of findings on the relative strengths and weaknesses of partition as a solution for long-term stability and security in Iraq. There is also discussion concerning the impact of a partition solution on the US military and its operations in the region. Finally, there are recommendations for future research into conflict resolution strategies that support US interests in the region.

### Iraq and Its People

Modern Iraq traces its history to the Ottoman Empire, which controlled the region from the 16th century to the 20th century. Ottoman control ended with the defeat of the Axis powers at the conclusion of World War I and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Iraq was established as a League of Nations mandate under British control with the signing of the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 [7]. The following year, the British established a monarchy-based government in Iraq similar to their own, including an indigenous Iraqi military system and a western style democratic constitution. Hundreds of years of Ottoman rule had an immediate and lasting impact on the newly established Iraqi Army, which ultimately evolved into one of Iraq's strongest government institutions. Sunni Islam was the official religion of the Ottoman Empire, so only Sunni Muslims had received advanced military training and postings as officers and leaders within the Ottoman ranks. Whether the British rulers of Iraq realized it at the time or not is

unclear, but in establishing an indigenous army and relying primarily on existing training and expertise, there was a clear separation of Sunni and Shiite Muslims along the lines of rank [8].

The Iraqi monarchy gained full independence from the United Kingdom in 1932. Over the next 26 years, the democratic structure within the central government steadily lost favor while the Sunni-dominated Iraqi army gained prominence. In 1958, Iraqi army leaders declared Iraq a republic; ending the British-established monarchy and beginning 45 years of military-strongman (and Sunni Arab) leadership of Iraq [9].

### Sunni, Shiite, Kurd: Understanding Basic Differences

Volumes have been written on the histories, cultures, interactions, and hardships of these three peoples. At the risk of oversimplification, it is necessary to establish a very basic understanding of these three cultures within the paper. We must do so in order to gain understanding of the current sectarian strife in post-Saddam Iraq and to adequately analyze the potential for partition to enable the peaceful co-existence of these three peoples.

There are over 30 million estimated Kurds in the world, making them one of the largest ethnic groups without their own nation-state [10]. Most of the modern history of the Kurdish people involves their quest for independence. They are considered to be one of many Iranian tribes (the predominant tribe being the Persians), and though their primary religion is Sunni Islam, they spent centuries under harsh Ottoman rule prior to World War I because of their Iranian heritage. One of the best chances for Kurdish independence came with the 1919 Treaty of Versailles; however, the establishment of Iraq and modern Turkey left Kurds without their own land. Furthermore, without a nation of their own, the Kurds have been systematically subjected to severe repression by unfriendly nations seeking to preserve their territorial integrity as well as their ethnic rule. As a result, today's Kurds find themselves minority citizens of countries dominated by Arabs (Iraq), Persians (Iran), or Turks (Turkey), although there are still strong movements for independence among Kurds. Kurds comprise 15–20% of the population of Iraq, and they reside primarily in the northern region of Iraq, although there is a substantial Kurdish population in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad [11].

There are two predominant Muslim sects within the borders of Iraq—Sunnis and Shiites. Both of these groups are overwhelmingly Arab in ethnicity. Thus, their differences are not based on ethnicity or even religion, but rather on adherence to different sects of the Muslim religion.

While there are more than these two sects of the Muslim faith and there are also subdivisions within the sects, Sunni and Shiite represent the great majority of players internal to the Iraqi struggle. These two sects also represent the majority players in the region surrounding Iraq, and as such, play an important role in regional stability and the ultimate success of any solution in Iraq. Both groups trace their theology to the life of Muhammad, who lived in the period of 600 AD and whom Muslims believe was the last prophet of God. However, the death of Muhammad and the determination of who should succeed him as the leader of Islam mark the origin of the rift between these two groups.

According to Juan Cole, a Middle East and Islamic scholar at the University of Michigan, a primary belief among Shiite Muslims is that:

“Muhammad’s son-in-law, Ali, and his 11 lineal descendants (called Imams) should have held power in the nascent Islamic empire after the prophet’s passing. They hold that until the supernatural reappearance of the 12th Imam, all government is less than perfect. [12]”

In other words, the leader or leaders of Islam should be direct descendents of Muhammad; ordained by Allah and not chosen through traditional governmental means of selection such as election or appointment by popular means. Shiites believe that only these leaders—the Imams, are infallible and impeccable. While they are awaiting the reappearance of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam, only religious scholars and clerics with years of formal education and study can surmise the correct decisions for governance of the people.

By comparison, following Muhammad’s death Sunnis believed that political leadership should be held by an “oligarchically elected caliph” [13]. In later years, this has come to be viewed as leadership selection by consensus and is based upon a quote from Muhammad that states, “My community will never agree in error” [14]. According to Enayat, “the Prophet is thus claimed by the Sunnis to have conferred on his community the very infallibility that the Shi’i ascribe to their Imams” [15]. Interestingly, there was a brief period in the history of Islam when both sects agreed on the leadership of the faith—when Muhammad’s son-in-law Ali was the first Imam (Shi’i) and the fourth Caliph (Sunni). This brief period was ended by power struggles that amplified the differences between the two sects and resulted in violence [16]. Since that time, the differences have grown in virtually every aspect of daily life, including Islamic theology, rituals, law, history and justice; but my research indicates that these many differences can all be traced back to one central issue: who’s in charge.

Control in Iraq is seen as critical to both groups for the survival and advancement of their beliefs. Outside Iraq, the situation is not terribly different. The overwhelming majority of countries in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, and Afghanistan, adhere to the Sunni philosophy of Islam. These countries each have Shiite minorities, but they have been relatively silent minorities until the last 10–15 years. Only Iran exists as an overtly Shiite Islam nation. Yet of the two sects, Shiite Islam is expanding far more rapidly than Sunni Islam; many believe this is a result of the 1979 Islamic Revolution that occurred in Iran and motivated the US hostage crisis that same year. Whatever the causes, the dynamics of these two sects of Islam serve to further complicate the situation in Iraq through factors such as proxy interests that are sponsored outside the country but have tremendous effects within Iraq's borders.

#### The Academic Argument for Partition

Chaim Kaufmann is credited within academia as the most ardent advocate for partition as a lasting and preferred solution to ethnic civil wars. His 1996 article on the subject has been the primer for extensive debate on the pros and cons of partition within academic as well as foreign policy circles over the last ten years. The sectarian violence in Iraq following the 2003 US-led invasion has only served to heighten the interest in and debate of partition as a potential solution for that country. Although the sectarian conflict within Iraq is only partially ethnically based—between Kurds and Arabs, Kaufmann does indicate that conflicts like the Iraqi Sunni-Shiite conflict can also be best categorized with ethnic conflicts because the individual loyalties to one's sect are quite rigid [17].

Kaufmann begins his argument by stating that solutions to ethnic civil wars do not depend on why the wars started for two primary reasons:

“First, in ethnic wars both hyper-nationalist mobilization rhetoric and real atrocities harden ethnic identities to the point that cross-ethnic political appeals are unlikely to be made and even less likely to be heard. Second, intermingled population settlement patterns create real security dilemmas that intensify violence, motivate ethnic ‘cleansing,’ and prevent de-escalation unless the groups are separated” [18].

These security dilemmas and hardened ethnic identities form the basis for Kaufmann's partition argument. He states that ultimately, there are only three alternatives for solving the security dilemma left by ethnic civil war. The first two are total military victory by one side and third-party, long-term occupation and suppression of warring parties. The third is partition—

separating opposing groups demographically into “defensible enclaves” [19]. He then concludes his argument by examining how ethnic civil wars end, and the effectiveness of partition in securing that end.

To understand Kaufmann’s rationale for partition, we must understand what ethnic identities are in the context of this discussion, along with when, how, and why ethnic identities are hardened by civil war. According to Kaufmann, ethnic identities are derived based upon language, culture, religion, and parentage. Ethnic identities are stronger and more ingrained than ideological or religious identities, because the combined components are most difficult to modify. In the instance of parentage as a component of ethnic identity, it is impossible to change. Kaufmann points out that while not every member of an ethnic group will be mobilized to serve as an active fighter, it is virtually unheard of for someone to fight for an opposing group. In order for that to happen, group leaders would have to appeal to members of the opposing ethnic group and convince them of the benefits associated with joining that group. Kaufmann points out that this is unlikely because “As ethnic conflicts escalate, populations come increasingly to hold enemy images of the other group” [20]. These images only intensify as the conflict expands to the level of large-scale violence, because real or imagined atrocities committed by the opposing group provide increasing justification for hard-line rhetoric.

In some cases, there may be individuals who are members of a specific ethnic group but place little value on that identity. Kaufmann points out that ethnic war reduces the opportunity for these individuals to support opposing ethnic groups for two reasons. First, hard-liners who are members of the same ethnic group will place immense pressure and even impose sanctions on members of the group who do not contribute to the cause. These extremists will likely point out that the individual’s actions endanger the security of the larger group and may even assign the title of “traitor” to the individual, a title that could result in harsh action against the individual or his or her family. The second reason for reduced scope of identity choice is that these individuals may have identity imposed upon them by the opposing group. Examples of this phenomenon include German Jews and Rwandan Tutsis. In cases where these “undecided” individuals reside peacefully together in multi-ethnic towns, Kaufmann provides examples of polarization occurring as the result of “radicalized refugees” who undermine the potential calming effect of moderate leaders who support tolerance in those areas. The ultimate hardening

effect on identity choice imposed by ethnic war is the fear of genocide. This fear is often fueled by hard-liner rhetoric that paints the enemy as a threat to the group's survival and therefore justifies unlimited violence against that enemy group.

Next, it is necessary to examine Kaufmann's argument about the "intense security dilemma" that occurs as a result of civil war and necessitates partition in order to ensure stability and lasting peace. The security problem reaches criticality when violence becomes so widespread that ethnic communities cannot rely on the state to effectively intervene and provide protection. At that instant, each ethnic community must mobilize and assume responsibility for the group's collective security. Once multiple groups reach this point, a condition of anarchy exists, and each group faces a real threat to its security from the mobilized opposing group for two basic reasons. The first reason involves the inflammatory words spoken by group leaders during mobilization. This rhetoric is usually designed to justify mobilization and garner support within the group. Whether intentional or not, these battle cries often indicate that defensive security is not the only purpose for mobilization. This is compounded by the second reason for the security threat—just about any military capability that is intended for defense can also be used for offensive measures. According to Kaufmann, once this security threat is recognized and acted upon by opposing groups, neither side can afford to demobilize until the threat is effectively eliminated.

Kaufmann points out the importance and the effect of demography on the perceived security dilemma. When ethnic groups are demographically mixed, there is a greater security dilemma than when they are separated, because the need for offensive military action is greatest. With high levels of mixed demography, a collective group defense is next to impossible until members of the opposing group are killed or driven out of the area. Once offensive operations remove members of the opposing group, a homogeneous enclave can be formed which is easier to defend and thus reduces the severity of the security dilemma. But even well-defined homogeneous enclaves are not secure if those enclaves exist behind the opposing group's front. In this instance, groups are motivated to attack into the opposing force's lines in order to rescue their co-ethnics and potentially seize additional settlement areas. At the same time, the groups will seek to wipe out islands of enemy settlements in their own areas to eliminate the motivation

for rescue attempts by the opposing group. An example of this phenomenon is the Greek and Turkish Cypriots from 1955 to the present.

In addition to military operations focused on eliminating ethnic rivals, ethnic war and the resulting security dilemma also causes ethnic unmixing. Faced with the prospect of attack by opposing ethnic forces, entire segments of settlement areas are forced to relocate in search of security, often in order to survive. Historically, there have been examples of third-party intervention to control ethnically motivated attacks and eliminate the need for ethnic unmixing. Kaufmann argues that once the third-party forces withdraw, the conflict still exists, and ethnic violence will resume. Even if an imperial conquering force recreates a national government, neither of the opposing ethnic groups would entrust their safety and security to it because the security dilemma still exists as long as the two groups are intermingled [21].

On the other hand, Kaufmann cautions that separating the ethnic groups may not guarantee peace, but it does allow peace. The separation of groups eliminates the earlier described need for cleansing and rescue operations which in turn will refocus any military operations away from the offensive and back to the defensive. If either side still desired to seek offensive goals, the operation would be much greater in scope—akin to interstate warfare. For this reason, the cost of the operation would be much greater, and conventional deterrence dynamics would apply [22]. Examples of successful population exchanges provided by Kaufmann include Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey from the 1920s, and Armenia and Azerbaijan from the early 1990s.

The next segment of Kaufmann's paper looks at four alternatives to separation and discusses their weaknesses in light of theory and how ethnic civil wars have ended during the 50-year period between 1944 and 1994. The first alternative Kaufmann examines is suppression, or the total military victory of one side resulting in the suppression of the opponent. He argues against suppression by stating that third parties involved in post-war humanitarian intervention would almost never support the forcible suppression of one group by another. Further, the suppressed group is highly likely to rebel again if it senses any opportunity to do so. Similarly, Kaufmann argues against the second alternative to separation, reconstruction of ethnic identities. He points out that "replacement of ethnicity by some other basis for political identification requires that political parties have cross-ethnic appeal, but examples of this in the midst of ethnic

violence are virtually impossible to find” [23]. The hardening of ethnic identity described earlier is too difficult to overcome, and leaders of ethnic groups have little incentive to promote a new identity where their influence may be reduced.

The third alternative to separation that Kaufmann examines is power-sharing or consociational democracy. There are four primary aspects of this approach: 1) shared execution of governmental power, 2) proportional representation within government positions and expenditure of government funds, 3) autonomy on ethnic issues, and 4) a minority veto that can be exercised by either group for issues of critical importance. This fourth aspect of power-sharing is the main flaw that dooms it as an alternative. Kaufmann argues that honoring the minority veto is “inherently voluntaristic,” and for that reason power-sharing cannot resolve ethnic conflict [24]. When Greek Cypriots felt that Turkish Cypriots were abusing their minority veto, they refused to acknowledge the veto and for a period of time, operating the government in violation of the Cypriot constitution [25].

The fourth and final alternative to separation that Kaufmann discusses is state-building. State-building is an inherently third-party task and is also referred to as conservatorship. In this alternative, a third-party or international group enters the failed state either by request or forcefully to administer part or all of the key government functions, development of a constitution, economic redevelopment, and elections. The intervener must maintain or enforce peace until the new government can stand on its own. As a result, this approach almost always involves prolonged military intervention with relatively high costs and significant risk to the interveners. According to Kaufmann, the ultimate success of this approach depends on unlikely electoral outcomes that will protect the interests and safety of all parties once the interveners depart. Even if the desired electoral outcomes can be achieved, they are likely coerced by the interveners, and the approach ends up being a more costly means of attempting a power-sharing arrangement.

Kaufmann concludes his arguments by rebutting objections to ethnic partition. To those who believe that partition encourages splintering of states, he argues that government suppression of secession attempts makes them extremely costly and unlikely unless the state was destined to break up anyway. Others may argue that population transfers cause suffering. Kaufmann replies that spontaneous refugee movement causes the greatest suffering, while



planned relocations supported by the international community would be much safer. Some may believe that separation merely substitutes international conflict for civil unrest. While post-partition wars are possible, Kaufmann argues that they are unlikely and the cost of intercommunal slaughter justifies separation [26]. Another potential weakness of partition is that the resulting states may not be robust enough to survive. Kaufmann points out that there are no historical examples of partitioned states that failed economically. Further, international influence and support of the resulting states goes a long way toward ensuring the economic viability of the resulting states. Finally, Kaufmann argues that while partition does not resolve ethnic hatred, there is little that anyone could do to solve this issue. Instead, partition provides a means of reducing interethnic antagonisms and perceived security threats. In his 2004 paper for the journal *Security Studies*, scholar Alexander Downes endorses the argument for partition when he states:

“Partition has potential because it minimizes the degree to which groups must cooperate with and trust one another; does not require them to disarm or merge their militaries; limits the level of external military intervention required and allows it to be used to better effect; and, by satisfying nationalism and the need for physical security, allows passions to cool between formerly hostile groups” [27].

While it may not result in a perfect peace, Kaufmann argues that partition will provide the means for safer and longer lasting peace following ethnic conflicts.

#### The Academic Argument against Partition

While there are many academics, political scientists, and politicians who ardently support partition as the only hope for resolving ethnically motivated civil conflict, there are also a significant number of opponents to Kaufmann’s partition theory among experts in the field of international conflict management. In 2004, the journal *Security Studies* invited scholars to submit papers on conflict management topics that linked existing theory to actual events. Although several international conflicts were active during this timeframe, the unspoken focus of the issue was on the war in Iraq and the sectarian violence that was growing in scope during early 2004. Three scholars each submitted papers challenging three different aspects of Kaufmann’s claims of partition as the only means of settling ethnic civil war. While these articles are by no means the only evidence of concern with the partition argument, they represent three experts in the field who advise caution when considering use of this conflict management tool.

The first of these articles, “Separatist Wars, Partition, and World Order,” was written by James D. Fearon, a political scientist at Stanford University. In the article, Fearon warns that partition is likely to produce two undesirable incentive effects. First, if violence was used to cause the partition, then use of violence is rewarded and could encourage others who are seeking statehood to resort to violence. In this point, Fearon rejects the Wilsonian philosophy that “separatist nationalism stems from bad borders and incompatible cultures” [28]. Instead, he believes that there are countless numbers of cultural differences throughout the world that could potentially form the basis for nationalist movements and result in conflict with established states. To that end, the question of whether or not partition is the right tool depends on the source of the separatist nationalism along, with whether other states recognize its legitimacy.

Fearon’s second undesirable incentive effect indicates that the partition of a state raises questions about that state’s security and defense capabilities. If the state is initially less secure, the resulting states will suffer even weaker security. A partition order from external states or coalitions “would publicly proclaim that a state’s territory is secure only if it is militarily strong enough to be coded as a major power” [29]. When security of states is in question, there is a legitimate need to take actions that will improve the real and perceived security of that state. These actions include but are not limited to arms build-ups, proliferation of advanced weapon technologies (including weapons of mass destruction), and attempts to negotiate major power coalitions. When one state initiates these actions, other states—especially new states—are likely to follow suit because of the perception of weakness in their own security capabilities.

Fearon argues that before ad hoc partition should be implemented, there are other steps that the international community should consider to address root causes of the separatist nationalism rhetoric. First, the international community should take tangible measures to strengthen standards on human rights. Doing so could address what Fearon’s research indicates is a major factor behind nationalist insurgencies. Next, the international community should also impose sanctions against the state to discourage actions that are fueling the insurgency. Finally, partition should only be implemented in the event that it is a mutually agreeable remedy. In the case of forced partition, Fearon argues that drawing a new boundary line is “problematic if any line will leave an unhappy and fearful minority on one or both sides” [30]. He warns that the

result of such a forced partition may only be to transform a civil conflict into an international conflict.

The second expert who disagrees with Kaufmann's partition argument is David Laitin, a professor of political science at Stanford University. He has written several articles that address the causes of and solutions to civil wars, with emphasis on empirical analysis of ethnicity and its impact on civil conflict. Like Fearon, Laitin also wrote an article for the summer 2004 issue of *Security Studies* titled "Ethnic Unmixing and Civil War." In the article, he argues against Kaufmann's analysis that indicates an increased security dilemma when demography is most ethnically intermixed. Laitin's methodology involves examining the effects of enhanced ethnic group concentration inside state boundaries as the result of regional autonomy and/or the movement of peoples based on their ethnicity. His analysis is based on the University of Maryland's Minorities at Risk (MAR) Project dataset, which "analyzes the status and conflicts of politically-active communal groups in all countries with a current population of at least 500,000" [31].

Laitin's findings differ significantly from Kaufmann's in that his analysis finds an increased likelihood of insurgency, during the analyzed period between 1960 and 1998, when groups are regionally concentrated within a country. Even after conducting sensitivity analysis by disregarding other contributing variables within the MAR dataset individually (e.g., gross domestic product, terrain type, whether the group is from sub-Saharan Africa), the results are consistent. In the article, Laitin discusses two possible issues that partition advocates might have with his analysis. First, those favoring partition might argue that ethnic unmixing (conflict between different groups, an agreement for separation of the population, and then movement into separate areas) is a slightly different dynamic than regional concentration without prior conflict. Laitin points out that some amount of population separation and regional autonomy existed in most cases of ethnic civil war. In order for Kaufmann's claim to be valid, then, there should universally be a greater amount of concentration and autonomy once the conflict is successfully ended. Laitin offers five examples of successful civil war settlements in which this condition is not found: "Abkhazia (Georgia), the IRA (Northern Ireland), the Tuaregs (Mali), Katanga (Congo-Kinshasa), and the Kurds (Turkey)" [32]. He also offers two examples where civil war re-emerged in spite of substantial grants of autonomy—Chechnya and Southern Sudan. Thus,

Laitin points out that “it would be a violation of the historical record to claim that once civil wars begin among interspersed ethnic populations, it is not possible to resume civil peace without unmixing them and giving each group an autonomous homeland” [33].

The second possible issue that partition advocates might have with Laitin’s analysis is a concern that the MAR data do not adequately reflect detailed information about ethnic demography concentration. One example is the comparison of areas with a 50/50 population split between two groups, where one instance involves two homogeneous villages while the other instance involves two villages where each contains 50% of each group. Laitin concedes that this level of detailed data are not available in the MAR dataset, but he provides evidence that counters the conclusions of inherent instability that Kaufmann associates with mixed groups during conflict. Both the Ukrainian conflict against the USSR and the Basque war against Spain ended without separating ethnic groups into “defensible enclaves.” Even in cases where ethnic unmixing did occur in the immediate aftermath of conflict, Laitin offers several historical examples to point out that “Kaufmann’s evidence of fleeing ethnics with ‘hardened . . . identities,’ unable to live in security mixed with the ethnic other, is undermined by the demographic facts of voluntary return” [34]. In these instances, groups who had suffered ethnic cleansing returned to their previous villages and towns within years of short-term unmixing associated with civil conflict.

Laitin concludes his article with a final observation of partition theory. He suggests that partition theory implies that ethnic unmixing should be less necessary in stronger states, because those states should be more capable of protecting ethnic minorities. After conducting empirical analysis of the MAR data, Laitin’s analysis did not support this claim. In fact, he found that ethnic mixing reduces the probability of insurgency in both weak and strong states—where state strength was determined by gross domestic product (GDP). Overall, Laitin finds that a geographically concentrated group is one-and-a-half times more likely to be involved in rebellion than a region with mixed ethnicity. A regionally concentrated group involved in insurgency is provided low-cost means for communication and coordination. Regional concentration also raises the costs for the government or other policing body to seek out and find insurgents among a potentially sympathetic population.

The last of the three conflict management experts I examined whose research does not concur with Kaufmann's is Alan Kuperman of The University of Texas at Austin. Like the previous two scholars, Kuperman also provided a paper for the summer 2004 issue of *Security Studies* in which he critically analyzes Kaufmann's partition theory. His analysis indicates that Kaufmann's work has substantial merit. In spite of that fact, Kuperman argues that there are flaws in Kaufmann's research methods that result in erroneous findings—namely, that negotiated settlements cannot succeed in the aftermath of ethnic civil war. Kuperman's argument is based on a comparison of other conflict management research, a critical analysis of Kaufmann's research, and his own observations regarding inconsistencies in conflict management terminology and data usages and presentation.

Kuperman's comparison of other conflict management research and partition theory relies heavily on research published in 1996 by Mason and Fett. In this report, the authors analyze data from 28 civil wars found in the Correlates of War project. Their results indicate that ethnic civil wars are just as likely to be resolved by negotiated settlement as ideological civil wars. They also acknowledge that these findings are “at odds with most of the literature” [35]. Through empirical analysis, Mason and Fett conclude that two factors have the greatest influence on the likelihood that both types of civil war end in negotiated settlement. Smaller government armies and longer civil wars increase the chances for negotiated settlement. Mason and Fett offer a stark contrast to Kaufmann when they include consociational (or shared) government as one possible outcome of negotiated settlement, while Kaufmann's analysis mandates ethnic separation and/or regional autonomy.

Kuperman finds two primary reasons for the startling differences in the two research outcomes. First, he notes that while Kaufmann acknowledges eight cases of civil wars resolved by negotiated agreement, he discounts those eight cases because a large amount of physical separation, or de facto partition, existed prior to the outbreak of violence. Kuperman argues that crediting de facto partition for the successful resolution of conflict is improper because the “pre-existing physical separation proved insufficient, by itself, to prevent the outbreak of violence” [36]. Nevertheless, Kaufmann insists that none of the ethnic civil wars in his analysis was successfully resolved by a negotiated power-sharing agreement between the warring factions. Kuperman argues that this finding would only be complete if Kaufmann included an analysis of

a significant number of scenarios where power-sharing arrangements had been unsuccessfully attempted. In other words, the international community cannot assume that power-sharing won't work if it has never been attempted.

The second cause that Kuperman credits for the discrepancies in the two research outcomes is the marked difference in the two sets of civil war cases examined. He points out that “Although each study claims to examine all cases of ethnic civil war completed since the Second World War, there are only six overlapping cases among Mason and Fett’s twenty-eight and Kaufmann’s twenty-seven” [37]. In order to resolve this significant difference in research outcomes, Kuperman applies each of the studies’ findings to the other studies’ set of cases. When he applies Kaufmann’s methodology to cases from Mason and Fett, Kuperman finds two cases—Lebanon (1958) and Zimbabwe (1979)—that are inconsistent with Kaufmann’s argument against power-sharing settlements following ethnic civil wars. When he applies Mason and Fett’s methodology to Kaufmann’s database, the results “support Mason and Fett’s finding that ethnic civil wars are not less likely to be resolved by negotiated agreement than ideological civil wars” [38]. These outcomes cause Kuperman to assess that the difference in results is not purely because of different databases, but also due to use of different operational definitions. To resolve these differences, Kuperman argues for additional research to better define when a war has been resolved, whether the war is ethnic or ideological, and some more precise measure to define regional concentration of ethnic groups.

As he concludes, Kuperman offers one final critique when he points out the fallacy in Kaufmann’s “assumption that each ethnic group is monolithic, at least during and after violent inter-ethnic conflict” [39]. The reality of intra-ethnic divisions is important, Kuperman argues, because those differences help to make power sharing accords possible. In fact, there are often instances of factions within opposing ethnic groups that find areas of agreement due to intra-ethnic disagreements. According to Kuperman, partition may doom these potential factional alliances and instead promote violence within one or more of the separated groups.

All three of the research findings that I reviewed in this section indicate that partition offers some hope for an end to the killing and suffering associated with ethnic civil war. Yet all three offer strong evidence against Kaufmann’s argument that partition is the only tool that

should be considered. While partition offers one potential tool to the international community for addressing ethnic conflict, those seeking to end such conflicts must be aware of potential shortcomings associated with this strategy and must be prepared to consider alternative strategies if the situation warrants.

### Examining Partition in Iraq

The previous sections of this paper show that the theoretical arguments both for and against partition contain merit. The scholars provide historical, worldwide examples of partition's successes and its failures. While there is some agreement among academics, there is far more dissent on the effectiveness and practicality of partition. There are even historical cases that one group uses to defend partition while another presents the same case as an argument against it. But what aspects of the situation in Iraq as of 2006–2007 are similar to those historical case studies, and what elements differ? How would partition be implemented, and what would be the reaction within the region? In order to effectively analyze partition's practicality in Iraq, and its potential for effective conflict resolution in this complex scenario, there are several other aspects of the current situation I will also investigate. One critical consideration involves review of US interests and current strategic policy toward Iraq and the region. The desire to influence events within the region is a long-standing goal of US foreign policy. It follows that another important aspect of the problem that must be explored is insight into the policies, goals, and concerns of other countries in the region. Finally, I will hypothesize on the effects of partition if it were implemented in Iraq. This includes examining what a partitioned Iraq would look like, how it would function, impact on the predominant sects, and potential roles of the US military.

### US Interests and Policy in Iraq

The US National Security Strategy of 2006 consists of nine primary tasks focused on creating “a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system” [40]. The tasks are:

- “• Champion aspirations for human dignity;
- Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends;
- Work with others to defuse regional conflicts;
- Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends with weapons of mass destruction (WMD);
- Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade;

- Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy;
- Develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power;
- Transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century; and
- Engage the opportunities and confront the challenges of globalization" [41].

These tasks allude to the importance that the outcome in Iraq and the Persian Gulf region has with regard to US national security. While all these points are applicable to Iraq, the first four are particularly significant when considering the partition option. In the area of human dignity, considerations such as forced relocation of Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds must be weighed against other competing factors, such as the long-standing desire of the Kurdish people for an independent state. At the same time, the regional effects of partition must be considered because of the potential impact on US ability to strengthen alliances and defuse regional conflicts in cooperation with countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. Given Iran's aggressive pursuit of nuclear capabilities, the impact that partition in Iraq has on Iranian influence and power in the region is a critical consideration that falls under prevention of WMD threats to the US and its allies. Although I will discuss each of these factors in more detail later in the paper, it is important to note the long-term impact that US policy for security and stability in Iraq has on current and future ability to exercise influence abroad.

In addition to the US National Security Strategy, a location-specific and more detailed statement of strategy is described in the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*. Published in November 2005 by the US National Security Council, the document contains an overview of the enemy in Iraq, outlines the importance of victory in Iraq, and defines victory in terms of three phases:

- “**Short term**, Iraq is making steady progress in fighting terrorists, meeting political milestones, building democratic institutions, and standing up security forces.
- Medium term**, Iraq is in the lead defeating terrorists and providing its own security, with a fully constitutional government in place, and on its way to achieving its economic potential.
- Longer term**, Iraq is peaceful, united, stable, and secure, well integrated into the international community, and a full partner in the global war on terrorism” [42].

This definition of victory provides insight into two essential elements of current US policy in Iraq. First, there is an obvious emphasis on achieving an outcome in Iraq that facilitates



battling and defeating terrorism. The rallying cry calling for defeat of terrorism has been used often since September 11, 2001, to build public support. Yet the historical example in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of Soviet forces and subsequent power vacuum in the 1980s demonstrates the potential for terrorist organizations to gain footing. The Taliban in Afghanistan and Al Qaeda worldwide spawned from a Sunni movement called the Salafiyya. Salafis “seek to reform Islam by emulating the first generation of Muslims, whose pristine society they consider to have best reflected God’s wishes for humans” [43]. But it is important to note that the great majority of Sunni Muslims are not involved with Salafism or Al Qaeda [44]. According to a recent news article, “Al Qaeda is a Sunni organization that has been trying to use minority Sunni anxiety in Iraq to build support” [45]. It follows that US victory is contingent upon avoiding a situation where Iraqi Sunnis feel threatened and have cause to embrace the ideals of Al Qaeda or provide them safe haven.

The second element of current US policy mentioned above is contained in the longer-term portion of the statement defining victory. In addition to goals for peace, stability, and security, the statement specifies the desire for Iraq to be “united.” The subtitle of the strategy statement also echoes this intent: “Helping the Iraqi People Defeat the Terrorists and Build an Inclusive Democratic State” [46]. US policy in Iraq can certainly change, especially in light of the 2006 congressional elections and transition of majority rule in the legislative branch. But the fact that the standing US policy position is not favorable to partition in Iraq is noteworthy since any change would probably be analyzed by its ability to preserve the larger National Security Strategy.

### Regional Factors and Considerations

Given the US national security strategy outlined above, especially the desire to “develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power,” it is essential to consider the concerns, actions and objectives (both friendly and hostile) of Iraq’s neighboring countries. As Anthony Cordesman, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, points out, “Many other nations and international organizations are already involved in Iraq. Some—like Iran, Turkey, and Syria—are more problems than solutions. Some—like Britain and Australia—are key allies” [47]. Cordesman’s list is by no means exhaustive, yet it gives some idea as to the interest and involvement of other countries in the

region. It is worth noting that the regional neighbors of Iraq are all listed as “problems”—even Turkey, a traditional ally of the US. Clearly, establishing and maintaining effective cooperation with other countries in the region to promote US foreign policy objectives requires careful planning and coordination.

Although not included in Cordesman’s statement, another US ally—Saudi Arabia—is involved in Iraq, mainly in the area of providing Iraqi Sunnis with “money from wealthy individuals” [48]. According to a recent news article, one reason for this involvement is that “All of Iraq’s predominantly Sunni neighbors are getting increasingly nervous about the growth of Shiite nationalism led by Iran’s theocratic regime” [49]. The anxiety expressed by Iraq’s neighbors exists because, with the exception of Iran, all Iraq’s neighbors boast populations that are predominately Sunni Arab. Until the fall of Saddam’s regime, Iraq was governed primarily according to Sunni ideals, in spite of the fact that Ba’athist Party principles emphasized the need for secular government. Any unchecked Shiite domination in Iraq represents a major shift in the regional power balance. This outcome is possible but less likely under the current consociational arrangement in Iraq, in which Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites all participate in governing the country. A Shiite regime possessing significant wealth and bordering on Saudi Arabia is far more likely if Iraq is partitioned based on sectarian lines. According to Saudi Ambassador, Prince Turki, “To envision that you can divide Iraq into three parts is to envision ethnic cleansing on a massive scale, sectarian killing on a massive scale and uprooting of families . . .” [50]. Although Saudi Arabia is a US ally, it continues to demonstrate a willingness to act outside US wishes when it deems those actions to be in its own best interest. It is difficult to imagine improved US influence in Saudi Arabia if US actions result in a Shiite state along the Saudis’ northern border, and if Iraqi Sunnis are geographically left with no significant natural resources to manage.

Many of Iraq’s other Sunni neighbors have echoed a similar concern over the potential negative outcomes associated with a partitioned Iraq. One of those neighbors, Turkey, has an altogether different motivation for opposing partition. Like Iraq, Turkey has a large Kurdish population that lives mainly in the border area between the two nations. If Iraqi Kurds are given their own independent state or region as a result of partitioning Iraq, Turkey fears the negative “incentive effect” that Fearon warns against. Turkey’s Foreign Minister has spoken out against partition in Iraq on several occasions, stating “that dividing Iraq along religious or ethnic lines

would create chaos . . . neighboring nations would not acquiesce to a partition” [51]. Turkish concerns are not without basis, as Kurdish guerillas have been conducting insurgency operations in southeastern Turkey for several decades with the goal of obtaining greater autonomy. Specifically, Turkey fears a renewed Kurdish uprising within its own borders that would be focused on expanding a partitioned Kurdistan into southeastern Turkey. Further, an independent Kurdistan could potentially provide a safe haven for insurgents involved in operations against the Turkish government. Faced with this possible outcome, Turkey has increased military operations along the Iraqi border. And although Turkey is an ally of the US, these operations make it clear that it views its own geographic sovereignty as far more important than its relationship with the US. In other words, US influence toward Turkey aimed at promoting peace in a partitioned Iraq—especially in Iraqi Kurdistan—would almost certainly be nonexistent.

The last of Iraq’s neighbors, Iran, arguably poses one of the greatest challenges to US interests in the region and beyond. President Bush labeled the country a member of the “axis of evil” due to its known sponsorship of international terrorism and because of its unwillingness to comply with United Nations mandates regarding its nuclear program. Likewise, Iran refers to the US as the “Great Satan.” Although a US ally prior to 1979, Iran’s Islamic Revolution that same year dramatically changed the relationship between the two nations. For the first time, Shi’a Islam was designated an official state religion and theocratic rule was established. Throughout the 1990s, some thought that the fall of the Soviet Union would influence Iranians to overturn this mode of government in favor of a more democratic form of rule. However, conservative politicians have managed to keep centralized control of policy in the hands of senior religious leaders. This swing back toward conservative Shiite values was recently evident in 2005, when the reform president was replaced by a staunch conservative [52].

Several aspects of Iran’s interests regarding US involvement and the potential partition of Iraq are unclear. First, Iran has repeatedly criticized the US for its occupation in Iraq and has called for the withdrawal of all US forces from the region. Yet in the aftermath of the November 2006 US Congressional elections, fear of a quick US withdrawal from Iraq prompted a commentary in Tehran urging against a US pullout [53]. Another unclear aspect of Iranian interests involves the focus of the support it is providing to Shiite militias in Iraq. There have been numerous reports that clearly point to Iran’s involvement in exporting explosives

technology and training to Iraq. But it is unclear whether the objectives of this support are focused against Iraqi Sunnis or US forces. Mahdi militia forces loyal to Shiite cleric Moqtada Al Sadr have conducted operations against US troops in and around Baghdad. Although the attacks declined from 2004 to mid-2006, they have increased since that time. Meanwhile, Badr Brigade militia forces loyal to the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) have primarily targeted Sunnis. Iran has provided funds, technology, and training to both of these groups [54]. Similarly during the 1990s, the media widely reported evidence indicating Iranian links to violence against the US for involvement in the World Trade Center and Khobar Towers bombings. Regardless of whether the current target is US forces in Iraq or Sunni Arabs, Iran's actions seem to indicate continued intent to undermine US interests in the region.

Given Iran's demonstrated disdain for the US and its interests in the Persian Gulf region, it follows that one important consideration in deciding for or against partition includes determining which course of action is most likely to check increasing Iranian influence in the region. Iran is overtly, aggressively seeking increased involvement in the military and economic affairs of Iraq's central government, to include providing military training and equipment, assisting in reconstruction, and opening a branch of the Iranian national bank in Baghdad [55]. It is difficult, if not impossible, for Sunnis or Kurds to challenge Iranian influence on issues supported by the majority Shiite population reflected in the current Iraqi government. Yet increased Iranian influence in Iraq is almost certain to alienate Kurds and Sunnis, increasing the potential for sectarian conflict. Unless Iraq's central government is collectively willing to limit Iranian influence through such actions as minority veto or statutes defining limits for external state involvement, it seems that partition may limit Iranian influence more effectively. While a partitioned Shiite Iraq would likely foster strong ties with Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan and Sunni Iraq would almost certainly oppose or sharply limit such relations.

Another consideration for preserving US interests involves the potential for limiting Iranian influence via ethnic differences between Iraqi Arab Shiites and Iranian Persian Shiites. Although there are many historical examples of ethnically based conflicts between Arabs and Persians, the ongoing overt and exposed covert Iranian involvement in Iraq seems to indicate that Kaufmann's "hardening of identities" is more pronounced along sectarian lines rather than historical ethnic ones.

### Internal Factors and Considerations

After reviewing the interests of Iraq's neighboring countries and the US, the final area for analysis involves examining the effects of partitioning Iraq on the country itself, and on Iraqi citizens. One of the first questions that arise is—geographically, what would a partitioned Iraq look like? More importantly, how would a partitioned Iraq function politically, economically, and militarily?

To some extent, ad hoc partition among Kurds, Sunni Arabs, and Shia Arabs already exists in Iraq. As shown in Figure 1, Kurdish Iraqis are largely concentrated in the northern portion of the country, while Shia Arabs primarily occupy eastern regions in central and southern Iraq, along the Iranian border. Sunnis generally reside in the central and western regions of Iraq. The southern deserts along the border with Saudi Arabia are sparsely populated with a mix of Shia and Sunni Arabs. Although the populations are somewhat divided, Figure 1 points out that there are significant areas where groups are mixed. Figure 2 illustrates another complication in the determination of how to partition the country. Iraq is administratively divided into 18 governorates, only nine of which are predominantly homogeneous. The most obvious way to partition the country would be to do so along these existing boundaries. In fact, the new Iraqi constitution contains provisions for the creation of largely autonomous federated regions based on these existing governorates, if approved by majority. However, partition based on the existing administrative divisions seems more likely to increase conflict rather than decrease it, due to potential gain or loss of land and related resources. Even if the lines of division are redrawn to more accurately reflect the current ad hoc partition, several areas with mixed populations will likely require forced relocation of tens of thousands to fully effect partition and minimize sectarian cleansing.

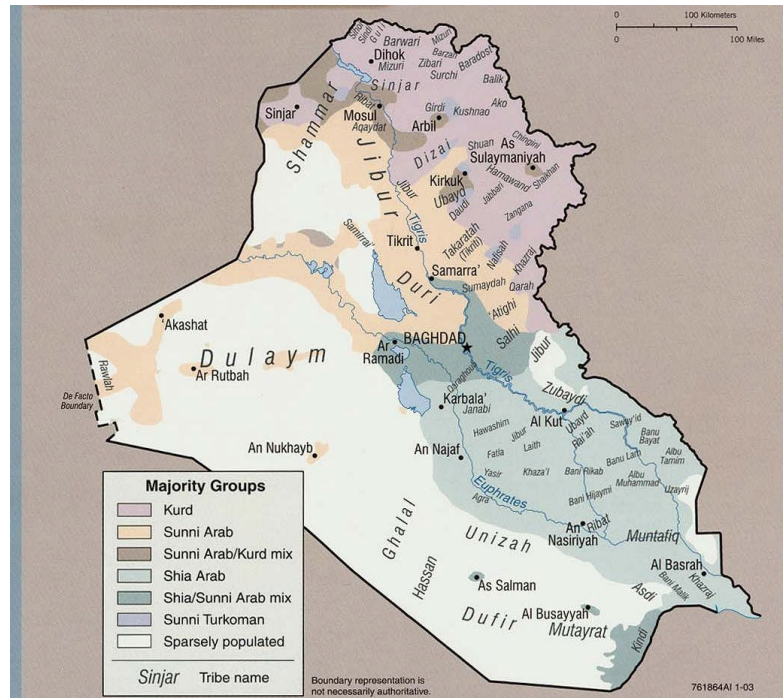


Figure 1. Iraq: Distribution of ethno-religious groups and major tribes [56].

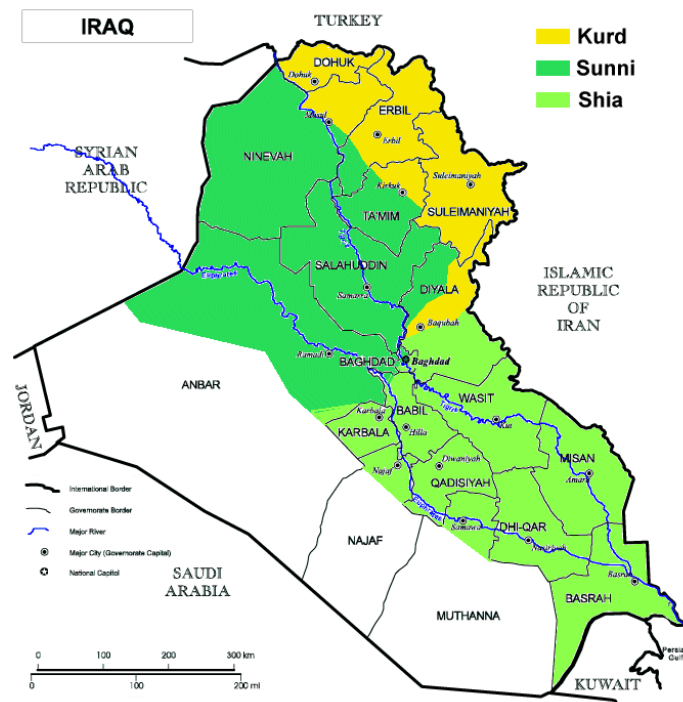
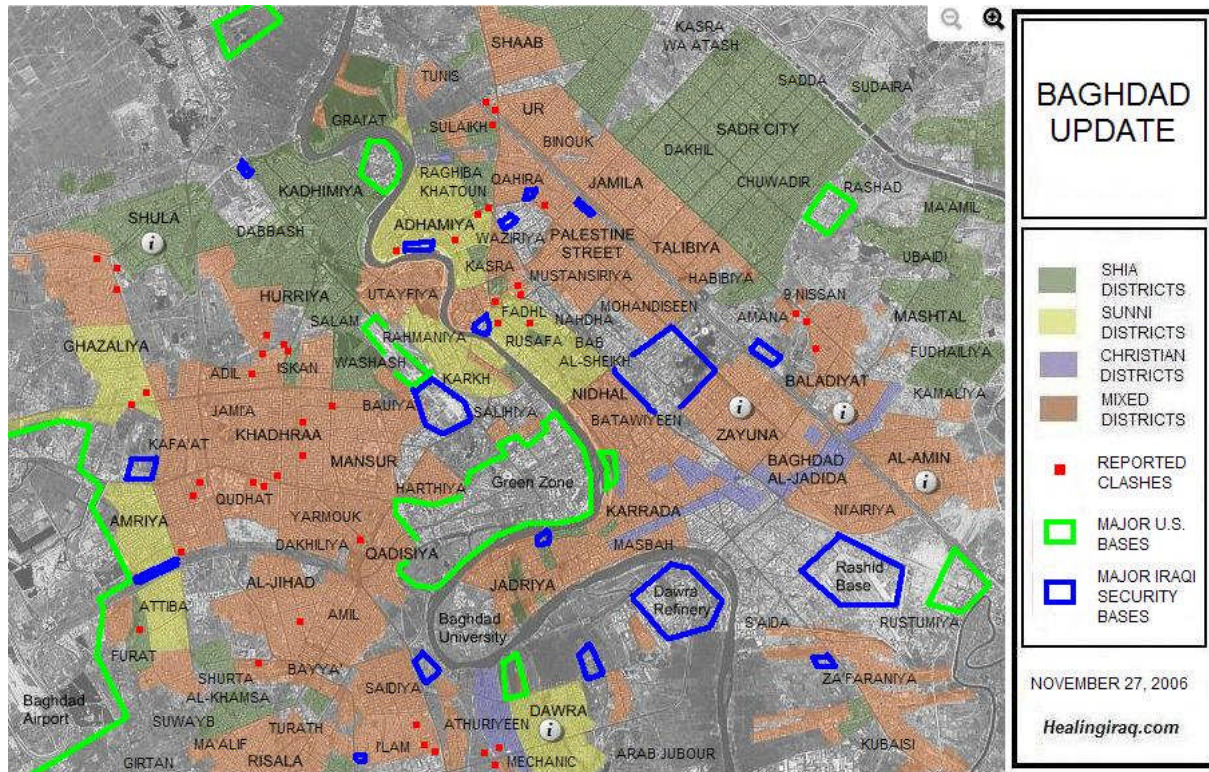


Figure 2. Kurd, Sunni, Shia [57].





**Figure 3. Ethno-religious map of Baghdad.**

A more difficult problem that must be addressed if Iraq is partitioned is whether to divide the governorate and the city of Baghdad, and how. Outside the city, the Baghdad governorate contains significant populations of Shia and Sunnis. Inside the city, all three groups are represented (see Figure 3). The city of Baghdad has a population of approximately 6.5 million [58]. Some near-homogeneous enclaves exist, such as Sadr City (Shiites) in the northwest and Adhamiya (Sunni) in the north central. Most of the districts in the city are mixed. As such, there is neither ad hoc partition, nor an obvious “line” that would allow for a relatively painless implementation of partition in the city. The only natural boundary that offers a potential dividing line is the Tigris River, which flows through the city and the governorate from north to south. Based on the sectarian orientation of bordering governorates, this would likely result in creation of a Sunni West Baghdad and a Shia East Baghdad (city and governorate). The impact on security, economy, infrastructure, and services would be dramatic. A massive security force would be required to secure the city, facilitate the movement of people and property, and to

prevent violence. The humanitarian impact would be leviathan, with forced relocation required for millions of people in the city alone.

Oil is Iraq's dominant commodity, traditionally providing 95% of the country's foreign exchange earnings [59]. The country also produces agricultural and chemical products, but these industries pale in comparison. Iraq's proven oil reserves are located primarily in its northern and southern extremes. Basra in the south and At Tamim (Kirkuk) in the north together have more oil reserves than the other 16 governorates combined [60]. While Basra is almost exclusively Shia, Kirkuk is populated by Sunni Arabs and Kurds. If partition is implemented, Kirkuk would likely become part of Iraqi Kurdistan, providing for a thriving oil-based economy. Shiite Iraq's economy would also benefit greatly from the Basra oil reserves, even though the other regions of that partitioned country contain relatively little oil. The economy of a partitioned Sunni Iraq is largely a question mark. There are no significant known oil reserves in that region of the country. Some partition advocates have indicated that an oil revenue-sharing agreement would have to be part of any partition arrangement [61]. Over the long term, such an agreement would be voluntary and subject to unilateral reversal—especially if the contributing parties (Kurds and Shia) feel that their contributions far outweigh benefits received. This realization is a primary reason that Arab Sunnis oppose partition of Iraq.

Politically, only the Kurds seem truly prepared to establish and sustain an effective post-partition government. Kurdistan already holds regional elections, has an armed defense/police force known as the Peshmerga (with a history of guerilla actions against Iraq, Turkey, and Iran), and has established basic local government-type functions similar to those executed by US states and localities. Yet the Kurds are quick to point out that their efforts are not focused on creation of a new country, separate from the rest of Iraq. They do so out of necessity, because their economy and defense capabilities are not presently sufficient to stand alone. This is particularly true since, as discussed earlier, a separate Kurdistan would likely be fiercely opposed by Turkey and Iran due to the potential impact on Kurds in both countries. A separate Kurdistan could also inspire violence along its southern border by acting as a catalyst to unite Arabs of all sects against Kurds. The result is a Kurdish desire to implement a state-based system similar to the US under an Iraqi Constitution that will “recognize the particular interests of states” [62].



Unlike the Kurds, neither the Shia nor the Sunnis appear prepared to function politically or militarily in a post-partitioned Iraq. There is no emergent leader or predominant organization in either of these groups with enough popular support to centralize political power across the whole of the sect. Instead, there are several fractional groups among both Sunnis and Shia that are often responsible for intrasectarian strife. These intragroup divides are most apparent in the form of militia organizations that frequently conduct armed engagements against other forces from the same sect. Given such divisive dynamics, it seems unrealistic to assume that the post-partition states could independently establish effective, lasting central governments in the near term. Doing so would require large investments of time, money, and security forces by external players who would have to be committed to the long-term success of the new state(s). With the possible exception of Iranian support to segments of Iraqi Shiites, no other countries are prepared to offer this kind of commitment. Presented with a Sunni Iraq devoid of natural resources and in need of substantial long-term support, it is easy to see why.

### Conclusion and Findings

It is undeniable that Kaufmann's predictions on the effects of ethnic civil wars—hardened ethnic identities and an intense security dilemma—have materialized in Iraq. But after investigation of the complexities associated with US, regional, and internal Iraqi interests and issues, it is difficult to accept Kaufmann's theory as the only remedy for two reasons. First, the absolute nature of the theory leaves no room for solutions other than complete one-sided military victory, third party occupation and suppression, or physical separation of groups, even though the literature points out historical examples of other outcomes. Second, Kaufmann's analysis unconvincingly negates the effectiveness of negotiated settlements as a solution, even though his research dataset contains numerous successful instances of this approach. One possible defense of Kaufmann's theory in light of this inconsistency involves his requirement for ethnic separation into "defensible enclaves"—a term he fails to define in detail. In spite of a significant US and coalition military presence in Iraq, the large geographic area combined with the nature of insurgent operations make the concept of secure, defensible enclaves there nearly impossible. Combine this with a strong potential for hostilities from regional neighbors and splintering within Sunni and Shia sects, and it is easy to understand why Fearon warns that partition "may simply replace civil conflict with interstate conflict" [63].

Similarities between the situation in southwest Asia and the theoretical arguments posed by Fearon, Laitin and Kuperman provide other reasons to doubt the application of partition as the only cure for Iraq. Kaufmann predicts that sectarian violence will be most prevalent where the greatest mixing exists. Sectarian violence is in fact greatest in the governorate of Baghdad, which has a larger mix of Sunni, Shia, and Kurd than any other governorate. However, instances of sectarian violence still occur in homogenous areas. Kaufmann's theory does little to account for the sources and resources associated with generation of the violence. Consider the Kashmir region between partitioned India and Pakistan, which is considered to be one of the most dangerous places in the world. Laitin, on the other hand, demonstrates empirically that concentration of groups provides a safe haven for launching insurgency. Sadr City, an exclusively Shiite district in Baghdad, is a primary source of violence initiated by members of that sect. Likewise, Al Anbar province is a known source of Sunni-backed violence. Partition would only harden the protective lines around these insurgents. From the viewpoint of regional concerns, Fearon's analysis of negative incentive effects best captures the real-world concerns expressed openly by Turkey and Iran regarding Kurdish populations in both countries. Again, Kaufmann's analysis falls short of addressing this concern. Finally, for those advocates of "soft partition" or federalism that ignores existing Iraqi governorates and redraws regions based solely on sect, Kuperman urges caution. He highlights previous research indicating that such arrangements nearly always devolve into either centralized authority or hard partition [64]. Thus, sect-based federalism would simply delay the inevitable. I am not implying that there are no instances in which partition would be an acceptable settlement technique. Fearon offers one instance when he discusses bottom-up or consensual partition that results from the desires of the populace on both sides of "the line." Any other implementation of partition would be involuntary on at least one side of the line. Forced partition has a strong potential for significant human misery with no guarantee of peace. Forced partition also creates tremendous internal and international economic, political, and military costs. These factors lead me to conclude that forced partition should only be implemented as a last resort.

Conflict resolution experts go to great lengths to argue their points for and against partition as the only means to end ethnic and sectarian civil war. The disparity that exists between the two camps is indicative of the complexity associated with resolving these kinds of

conflict and the enormous costs in human misery when resolution strategies fail. It is worthwhile to explore areas of conflict resolution where there is agreement among the experts. First, the experts agree that civil wars continue for longer periods of time than interstate wars, averaging 10 years [65]. This is perhaps the hardest fact to accept, given an apparent lack of patience and nearly universal desire for a quick fix in Iraq. Experts also agree that sectarian and ethnic wars are more difficult to resolve than ideological conflicts and that negotiated conclusions are harder to achieve when the warring parties are splintered due to an inability to achieve consensus. This fact indicates a need for policy that appeals to moderates within each of the sects. Finally, experts agree that negotiated solutions are more likely when opponents are no longer able to make advances through fighting. This illustrates the need for policies that directly reduce the effectiveness of any operations conducted by sectarian militants. The 2007 surge of additional US military forces should be focused on this goal.

### ***Findings***

1. Forced partition should not be implemented in Iraq.
2. Achieving peace in Iraq will take several years and requires patience.
3. Policies for peace should focus on majority, mainstream factions within the sects.
4. Policies must eliminate the perception that sects can advance their cause via fighting.

### **Recommended Areas for Additional Research**

The experts' findings indicate that the process for achieving negotiated settlement promises to be long and difficult, but not impossible. Just as Kaufmann is the primary academic proponent for partition, Arend Lijphart is an outspoken advocate for the theory of consociational, or power-sharing, democracy. A logical succession to this paper would be an applied study of consociational theory focused on the situation in Iraq, with strong emphasis on two areas. First, additional research should focus on maximizing incentives for moderates and accommodative behavior across sectarian lines. The other area for emphasis should explore methodologies for replacing sectarian loyalties with a stronger sense of Iraqi nationalism. Although the Kurdish, Shiite and Sunni identities have existed for thousands of years, prior to 2003 those identities were subordinate to being identified as an Iraqi. Instilling such a sense of national pride is an essential step toward achieving a resolution in Iraq that addresses US and regional interests, but more importantly, one that enables the perception of victory for Iraq itself.

Most Americans believe that it is essential for the US to “win” the war in Iraq for both nationalistic and international credibility reasons. More importantly, Iraqis and other peoples throughout the Middle East must see the outcome there as a victory for Iraq and the region. This perception is far more important to long-term US influence in the region, because it would indicate a shift away from the current belief that US actions are purely selfish and unconcerned with indigenous issues and concerns. A recent media report indicated that a majority of Iraqis believe that the US will establish a permanent military presence in Iraq and that the main US interest there is nothing more than Iraqi oil. This belief exists even though soldiers on the ground routinely express a desire for Iraqis to achieve independence so US forces can confidently leave Iraq in the hands of its citizens. Reports such as this make it clear that anti-US entities are making increasingly effective use of information. The diplomatic, economic, and most importantly, informational components of US national power should reflect this realization in order to most effectively complement military actions. A strong, focused, persuasive and committed information campaign should be developed, studied, debated, and then launched with this goal in mind. A determined emphasis on this often overlooked and misunderstood aspect of national power offers considerable potential for increasing US ability to exercise influence throughout the region. Failure to grasp and act upon the significance of information and the other nonmilitary components of national power in the current struggle in Iraq represent a less than whole-hearted effort and weaken the whole of US influence.

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